

VZCZCXRO8960
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #1953/01 2800705
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 060705Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4088
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0404
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0025
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0379
RUEAHQA/AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001953

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [SCUL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: OFFICERS TRAVEL NORTH TO HOST IFTARS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Cheryl Fernandes for reasons
1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (U) Summary: The Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, two Poloffs, Econoff, and two PolFSNs traveled to Kano and Kaduna on September 3 and 4 to host Iftar dinners for members of each community. Approximately 50 guests from the government, business sector, academia, and civil society were invited to each event. In addition to the Iftars, the A/DCM commissioned the Sarina Seed Storage Facility in Garko Local Government of Kano State. While in Kaduna, Post staff took the opportunity to meet with General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd.) at his home to discuss the upcoming Supreme Court case on the 2007 presidential election. A/DCM and Poloffs made a courtesy call on Kaduna businessman and former presidential candidate Lema Jibrilu at his home where they discussed Africa Command (AFRICOM), corruption, and the presidency. End Summary.

Commissioning Ceremony

¶2. (U) The Sarina Seed Storage Facility was funded by the Office of Security Cooperation under its Humanitarian Assistance program. The commissioning ceremony was held in the rural village of Sarina approximately one hour outside of Kano. The entire community gathered to hear remarks by the Acting Governor, a representative of the Emir of Kano, and by the Acting Deputy Chief of Mission. The crowd responded with great enthusiasm to the speeches and ribbon cutting.

Iftars

¶3. (U) Both Iftars were well attended. Guests appreciated Poloff's remarks in Hausa welcoming the guests and introducing the A/DCM. The A/DCM expressed the US's commitment to the protection and promotion of religious freedom and applauded those who work within their communities to promote peace, dialogue, and collaboration among people of different traditions. Post is looking at ways to broaden our outreach for next year beyond the small number that can be invited to a sit-down Iftar dinner.

Meeting with Buhari

¶4. (C) On September 4 when A/DCM asked Buhari if he was hopeful about the Supreme Court's upcoming decision on the 2007 Presidential Election, Buhari seemed upbeat although he

noted that the 2003 case was in court for 13 months. He opined that the current Chief Justice will make the difference as he is more honest than past judges. When questioned whether he thought concerns about the President's health will be a factor in the Court's decision, Buhari said that it would be "tragic legally if Yar'Adua's health is the cause for overturning the election." Buhari explained that the Court has three options: they can uphold election, the election could be canceled and another election held, or it could determine that the election should have gone to another candidate. Buhari said that if the election is upheld he is considering several possibilities for his future. When A/DCM suggested to Buhari that the most likely scenario may be that the election will be upheld, but given the President's health he may not be able to perform his duties, Buhari simply stated that the "safest thing for the country would be to follow the system" and allow the PDP to "sort it out internally." (Comment: Although in keeping with the northern elite's desire to hold onto the presidency, it is interesting that Buhari seems to favor resolving the succession question WITHIN the PDP party rather than through another election/selection of a northern candidate - in which he would presumably be a candidate. Buhari, as others have done as well, seems to give no thought to the idea of Jonathan taking over in the event of Yar'Adua's incapacity. End Comment.)

Meeting with Jibrilu

15. (C) On September 4 A/DCM, Poloffs, and PolFSNs met with Dr. Lema Jibrilu, a Kaduna businessman and a candidate in the

ABUJA 00001953 002 OF 002

1991-1993 presidential elections. They discussed AFRICOM, corruption, and the presidency. Jibrilu had the misconception that AFRICOM is a kind of military intervention, saying that if AFRICOM were in the Delta it could stop illegal bunkering. A/DCM responded by explaining that AFRICOM is an internal restructuring and that the United States is reluctant to become the world's police. On electoral reform, Jibrilu said that corruption is the real problem with the electoral process and that no reform is really needed. He opined that the deterrent to corrupt practices would be to jail individuals who participate in such activities and confiscate their property. He called Attorney General Michael Aondoakaa "absolutely useless" and maintained he is part of the problem with the legal system. He claimed that everyone believes the Attorney General is corrupt except the President. In regards to the presidency, Jibrilu asserted that Yar'Adua's only health problem are his kidneys, "otherwise he is healthy." He said that if the President dies or becomes incapacitated that "Nigeria will continue" but he claimed that Southern politicians would not aspire to the presidency. (Note: He did not elaborate how the North would prevent Jonathan from taking office, other than to say "we know who is who." End Note.)

16. (U) This cable is coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
Piascik